

## **Purchasing - Group Gatherings**

**FIACCT 04-11.00**

**Effective: 01-Jul-07**

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### **Purpose**

This policy establishes the policy and procedures to follow to acquire accommodations for group gatherings. This policy applies to all state-sponsored group gatherings. This policy does not apply to retirement functions (see the Employee Reimbursement – Retirement Refreshments policy in the PAYMENT section of this manual for policies regarding retirement functions). All purchasing functions performed under this policy by the State Travel Office are done under delegation agreement DGR016 issued by the Director of the Division of Purchasing.

### **Definitions**

Group Gatherings	Includes state-sponsored conferences, training sessions, board meetings, management retreats, and service award gatherings.
Accommodations	Includes meeting rooms and related equipment rentals, sleeping rooms, and food.
Management Retreat	A gathering of state agency personnel for the purpose of planning and discussing state agency goals, issues, programs, strategies, etc. A “Management Retreat” may also include non-management employees.

### **Policy**

- A. If the estimated cost of the state sponsored group gathering is more than \$1,000, agencies must complete a Group Gathering Authorization, form FI 58, to document the estimated costs and approvals. The department director or designee, and the head budget officer of the department must approve the acquisition of the state-sponsored group gathering accommodations by signing the form FI 58, regardless of the type of funds being used to fund the group gathering. Any delegation of this responsibility by the department head must be in writing and maintained in the agency for audit purposes.
- B. If the facility providing accommodations accepts state per diem rates for food and lodging, no further bids are required and State Travel Office approval is not required. If needed, the State Travel Office will provide assistance selecting a facility. A list of facilities that accept per diem rates is available on the Division of Finance Web site at [finance.utah.gov](http://finance.utah.gov), and then click on the “Travel” icon.
- C. If the facility selected by the agency does not accept state per diem rates for food and/or lodging, then the following policy applies:
  - 1. If the total cost of the group gathering is estimated to be \$1,000 or less, the agency may select the best source without seeking competitive bids.
  - 2. If the total cost of the group gathering is estimated to cost from \$1,000.01 to \$5,000 then the

agency must get two, preferably three bids from other comparable facilities and select the facility with the lowest bid. If the agency cannot get more than one bid then the agency must obtain approval from the State Travel Office.

3. If the total cost is estimated to be greater than \$5,000 then the State Travel Office will conduct the procurement. The State Travel Office must approve these gatherings.

D. If a Group Gathering Authorization, form FI 58, is required by policy statement A. above, no contract for accommodations should be signed by an agency representative until the form FI 58 is properly approved.

E. Agencies must follow the current in-state lodging policy if lodging is included. (See the Travel – Lodging policy in the TRAVEL section of this manual.)

F. The following are the state per diem rates for food provided at group gatherings:

- Breakfast \$8.00
- AM Break \$4.00
- Lunch \$11.00
- PM Break \$4.00
- Dinner \$16.00

Tax and gratuity may be added to these amounts for purposes of applying this policy.

G. The following guidelines are recommended for group gatherings that do not require an overnight stay or that do not last an entire day:

Meals provided for group gatherings starting by:

8:00 AM	Breakfast or AM Break
11:00 AM	Lunch
1:00 PM	PM Break

Meals provided for group gatherings ending by:

11:00 AM	Breakfast or AM Break
1:00 PM	Lunch
4:00 PM	PM Break
7:00 PM	Dinner

To be entitled to dinner, the function must have structured group interaction or activities such as speakers, presentations, or awards during the meal.

H. Agencies are encouraged to hold the group gathering at a state-owned facility.

I. If lodging is paid by the State, regardless of the source of funds:

- The gatherings must be held at a facility or location within the state.
- Agencies should hold gatherings at a location that is within 50 miles of where the majority of the attendees work. However, a management retreat may be held at a location more than 50 miles from where the majority of the attendees work.

- Lodging should not be reimbursed more than once every two (2) years for management retreats.
- Reimbursement for lodging may not exceed two (2) nights for management retreats.
- Attendees traveling to a gathering less than 50 miles in excess of their normal office commute are not entitled to lodging reimbursement. However, if it is necessary to have an attendee at a group gathering site before or after the conference hours to perform administrative or training duties, that attendee may be lodged even if they are traveling less than 50 miles in excess of their normal office commute, if documented and approved on the form FI 58.
- For each 8 hours of meeting time, one night of lodging may be reimbursed. However, for attendees who work more than 150 miles from the gathering site, one additional night of lodging may be reimbursed to allow for travel to or from the gathering.
- Occasionally, in the judgment of a department director, the nature or circumstances of a group gathering may warrant an exception to this section (policy statement I) that addresses lodging. In those instances, a department head may approve an exception. Exceptions must be justified in writing, in the comments section of form FI 58. Department heads are responsible to ensure any exception is necessary and reasonable and in the best interest of the state. The funding source of a group gathering is not a valid reason for granting an exception.

J. If it is necessary to make changes to the negotiated arrangements that increase the overall cost, the agency must complete an amended form FI 58, Group Gathering Authorization, and have it approved by the department head or designee, and if required by policy statement C, the State Travel Office .

K. Supporting documentation for payments for group gathering accommodations must include the following:

- Original invoices
- Agenda
- List of attendees and affiliation
- Copy of approved form FI 58 Group Gathering Authorization
- Copy of signed contract

## Procedures

### Responsibility

### Action

#### Agency

1. Determine it is necessary to acquire group gathering accommodations and, if necessary, complete a form FI 58, Group Gathering Authorization. The form is available on the Division of Finance Web site at [finance.utah.gov](http://finance.utah.gov), and then click on the "Travel" icon.
2. Select a facility. Consult the list on the Division of Finance Web site of facilities that will accept state per diem rates. If necessary, contact the State Travel Office for assistance selecting a facility.
3. Submit the form FI 58 to the agency director or designee and to the budget officer for approval. Document any exception to policy statement I in the comments section of form FI 58.
4. Contact the facility and make tentative arrangements for the gathering. The facility will prepare a draft contract detailing all arrangements.
5. For those group gatherings requiring State Travel Office approval under policy statement C, send the completed form FI 58 and the draft contract to the State Travel Office for approval.

#### Division of Finance

1. Upon request, assist the agency in selecting and arranging for a facility. Review the form FI 58 and the draft contract, identify any inappropriate charges, and work with the agency and facility until acceptable arrangements have been negotiated.
2. Upon request, assist the agency in ensuring the facility will make any required changes to the draft contract and submit a final contract to the agency.
3. For those gatherings requiring State Travel Office approval under policy statement C, approve the form FI 58 and issue a Travel Authorization Number. Return the approved FI 58 to the agency. Enter the purchasing delegation number DGR016 on the contract signature line for the Division of Purchasing.

**Agency**

1. Sign the final contract. Hold the group gathering, pay bills, and retain required supporting documentation. For payments on contracts requiring State Travel Office approval under policy statement C, send them the contract for signature, and ensure the Travel Authorization Number is entered in the description field of the FINET payment transaction.
2. To make changes to an approved gathering, complete an amended form FI 58, indicate changes, and obtain department head or designee and the budget officer's approval and the State Travel Office approval if required by policy statement C.

**Division of  
Finance**

1. Audit payments for compliance with this policy and ensure any exceptions are properly documented and meet the "necessary and reasonable" criteria.